

Enhancing Public Demand for Safer Speeds on the Road: Input from Australian and New Zealand Stakeholders

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Abstract

Community engagement to effectively manage speeding is an important priority and changing community perceptions about speeding is critical to reducing road trauma. Stakeholder consultations were conducted to identify interventions that could create, increase, and/or sustain public demand for safer speeds in Australia and New Zealand. Twenty-one stakeholders provided feedback on a proposed Campaign Strategy containing nine aims and evidence-based countermeasures. Overall, support was expressed for the Campaign Strategy, many noting success was dependent on long term political support and sustained resourcing. The proposed Campaign Strategy documents countermeasures to be trialed and evaluated to enhance demand for safer speeds.

Background

Changing community perceptions about speeding is an important priority. Improving compliance with speed limits and engaging more effectively with the community on the role of speed in road safety are identified in Australia's National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (ATC, 2011). Similarly, New Zealand's national strategy, Safer Journeys, recognises the need to implement a communications strategy to alter community dialogue on speeding, including increasing understanding and acceptance of safer speeds by road system designers and users (NRSC, 2013). This paper documents stakeholder consultation as part of an Austroads-funded research project aimed at identifying interventions that could create, increase, and/or sustain public demand for safer speeds in Australia and New Zealand. Drawing on evidence from various disciplines, an overall Campaign Strategy containing nine aims was proposed (Table 1), including potential implementation facilitators and barriers and evaluation considerations. Feedback was sought in order to prepare a final Campaign Strategy for future trial and evaluation.

Method

Sixty-one organisations and individuals from Australia and New Zealand were invited to participate in stakeholder consultations to provide feedback on a draft Campaign Strategy that was developed from a review of road safety and behaviour change literature. Invitations were sent to a range of road user advocacy groups and individuals, jurisdictional transport authorities, Members of Parliament, and road safety and advertising/behaviour change researchers to obtain a diverse range of views about demand for safer speeds. Prior to questionnaire completion, participants were asked to read a literature review summary, the rationale for categorisation of nine aims within the overall strategy derived from the literature, and the proposed Campaign Strategy containing a range of countermeasure options to address each aim. Comment was sought on suitability and feasibility of, and likely barriers to, the countermeasures within the draft Campaign Strategy and applicability to the Australian/New Zealand context. Twenty-one key stakeholders participated.

Table 1. Nine aims to address the need to create, increase and/or sustain public demand for safer speeds in Australia and New Zealand

	Aim
Create demand for safer speeds	1. To enhance community understanding of risk associated with speeding
	2. To enhance community understanding that increased speeds result in increased crash severity, based on uncontested laws of physics
	3. To increase awareness of purpose and benefits of speed enforcement
Increase demand for safer speeds	4. To challenge the prevailing descriptive norm that ‘everyone speeds’
	5. To challenge the injunctive/moral norm that speeding is acceptable and approved of by others (i.e., that speeding is no big deal)
	6. To challenge the perception that speeding saves a large amount of time, and/or that it is possible to make up a large amount of lost time by speeding
Sustain demand for safer speeds	7. To challenge the perception that complying with speed limits is hard/impossible and to promote individual responsibility for and ability to choose and control one’s speed
	8. To continue to build a positive culture surrounding road safety more broadly, and speeding more specifically
	9. To challenge language associated with speeding in order to alter public perception of its importance

Results

The majority of respondents expressed support for the Campaign Strategy; many noting that it addressed key misperceptions and complemented existing approaches. Success was noted by many as dependent on long term political support and sustained resourcing. A number of barriers were identified including: lack of awareness of the ‘true’ picture of how much speeding occurs and that enforcing low level speeding may be viewed solely as revenue-raising by some. The need for ongoing evaluation and for the Strategy to complement what is already in place was highlighted. A small number of respondents expressed some concerns, including that parts of the Strategy may backfire if not carefully implemented. Feedback was incorporated into the final proposed Campaign Strategy to enhance potential effectiveness.

Conclusion

The proposed Campaign Strategy provides countermeasures for trial and evaluation to enhance public demand for safer speeds. It also highlights current knowledge across disciplines that may be harnessed to create effective change. A range of barriers and facilitators are identified in the Campaign Strategy to assist jurisdictions to determine the likely feasibility from their unique perspective. Implementation issues to be addressed include speed limit setting policies, resourcing, messaging/advertising strategies, and political will for promoting safer speeds.

References

- Australian Transport Council. (2011). *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020*. Canberra: Australian Transport Council.
- National Road Safety Committee. (2013). *Safer Journeys Action Plan 2013-2015*. Wellington: New Zealand Government.